Research Notes for Mary Ellen "Nellie" Emperor McEvoy (1846 - 1904)

Research Overview:

Mary Ellen "Nellie" Emperor McEvoy was born in June 1846 in County Cork, Ireland, bearing the surname Emperor, a name that appears only rarely in Irish records.

Unlike many immigrant women whose early family ties vanish from view, Nellie's parents and siblings are documented together in Michigan by 1870, with her birth family remaining largely intact and living out their adult lives in neighboring towns. While the details of Nellie's early years are thin, the record suggests continuity. An immigrant family that settled, stayed connected, and persisted locally. This stable family context stands in contrast to the later fragmentation that would define Nellie's married life. Marriage introduced instability into Nellie's life that had not been present in her birth family. She married Charles Patrick McEvoy in 1865, and most of their children were born and died within short spans of time, with deaths clustering in infancy and early childhood. These losses recur alongside frequent moves across state lines and gaps in census enumeration, producing records in which infants appear briefly and disappear, births occur in different locations, and expected records fail to materialize

.

Nellie died in January 1904 in San Antonio, Texas, after suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis for three years. The move south may have been undertaken in search of relief from her illness, but it meant that her final months were spent far from Michigan. Charles was with her at the time of her death, and her body was returned to Grand Rapids for burial. This final trip echoes a pattern that marked her marriage: distance, endurance, and the absence of a stable endpoint during her lifetime.

Speculative Narrative:

Intentionally left blank.

Timeline:

Jun 1846 - Birth at Cork, Ireland.[1]

1861 - Arrival.[2]
Ship, port, and arrival date not identified. Her father arrived in Boston in 1850.

16 Aug 1865 - Marriage to Charles Patrick McEvoy in Corning, Steuben, New York.[3]

Charles P. McEvoy and Nellie (Helen) Emperor were married on 16 August 1865. Charles was the son of John McEvoy, and Nellie was the daughter of Thomas Emperor and Mary Hogan. The marriage record identifies Charles's father as John McEvoy.

Information in Charles McEvoy's Civil War pension file conflicts with the marriage record regarding the year of the marriage. In the pension file, Charles reported that he and Nellie were married in 1861. While the day and month of the marriage match the civil record, the year does not. This discrepancy suggests either an error in recollection or a deliberate misstatement when reporting the marriage to the Pension Office, possibly to place the marriage before Charles's Civil War service.

The marriage and death records differ in how Charles's father is named. Charles's death record identifies his father as Patrick McEvoy, while the marriage record gives the name John McEvoy. His father's full name was John Patrick McEvoy, with different records using different parts of his name.

The timing of the marriage is notable in relation to Charles's military service. According to his pension file, Charles mustered out of service on 4 July (or possibly 10 July) 1865 at Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. He married Nellie on 16 August 1865, slightly more than a month later, in New York. This sequence implies significant travel—more than eight hundred miles—between his discharge from service and his marriage.

---

[1] Birth Record

[2] Immigration Record

[3] Marriage to Charles Patrick McEvoy

Nellie appears in the record almost exclusively through her relationships—as wife and mother—rather than as an independent subject of documentation.

Jan 1867 - Birth of daughter Catherine "Kitty" McEvoy (1867-1869) at Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo, Michigan. [4]

8 Mar 1868 - Death of daughter Catherine "Kitty" McEvoy (1867-1869) at Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo, Michigan. [5]

2 years and two months old, died of pneumonia. The date of the record is June 1, 1870.

10 Oct 1869 - Birth of daughter Cora Irene McEvoy () in Ohio. [6]

1869 - Birth of son John "Johnnie" McEvoy (1869 -) in Ohio. [7]

1870 - U.S. Census, Census not identified; family not located.

The family may have been on the move during this census and not enumerated.

1871 - Death of daughter Cora Irene McEvoy (1869 -) in the United States. [8]

18 Nov 1872 – **Birth of daughter Mary Ellen McEvoy (1872 - 1935)** at Dowagiac, Cass, Michigan.[9]

1875 -Death of son John "Johnnie" McEvoy (1869 - 1875) at an unknown place, probably in the US.[10]

---

[4] Birth of daughter Catherine "Kitty" McEvoy

[5] Death of daughter Catherine "Kitty" McEvoy

[6] Birth of daughter Cora Irene McEvoy

[7] Birth of son John "Johnnie" McEvoy

[8] Death of daughter Cora Irene McEvoy

[9] Birth of daughter Mary Ellen McEvoy

[10] Death of son John "Johnnie" McEvoy

1880 - U.S. Census, perhaps in Michigan. Find

1880 - Death of sister Helen Emperor McShane (1813 - 1890) at Detroit, Wayne, Michigan. [11]

11 Jul 1883 -Birth of son Edmond Eugene "Edward" McEvoy (1883 - 1906) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[12] A stillborn female was also born on this day.

Edmond's birth on 11 July 1883 was not recorded until 19 May 1884, the same date a stillborn female was registered. The records do not clarify whether the two entries are related.

11 Jul 1885 - Birth and death of son Frederick McEvoy (1885 - 1885) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[13]

26 Feb 1896 - Death of mother Mary Hogan (1816 - 1896) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan. [14]

30 Apr 1896 - Death of father Thomas Emperor (1816 - 1896) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan. [15]

1890 Census.[16]

1900 US Census in Ada, Kent, Michigan

[11] Death of sister Helen Emperor McShane

[12] Birth of son Edmond Eugene "Edward" McEvoy

[13] Birth and death of son Frederick McEvoy

[14] Death of mother Mary Hogan

[15] Death of father Thomas Emperor

[16] 1890 census substitute

Charles McEvoy - head of household, white, male, born ?, age 59, married x years, born Canada, parents born in Ireland

Nellie McEvoy - wife, white, female, born ?, age 53, mother of x children, 2 living, born Ireland, mother born in Ireland.
Eugene Edmond McEvoy - son, white, male, born ?, age 16, single, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born in Michigan.

Nellie reports that she is the mother of 6 children, with two living.

This census captures one of the last moments in which Nellie appears as part of an intact household before the onset of her final illness and death four years later.

c. 1901–1904 – Nellie suffers from pulmonary tuberculosis.

c. 1903 – Charles and Nellie traveled from Michigan to San Antonio, Texas, during Nellie's illness with pulmonary tuberculosis.

30 Jan 1904 - Death at San Antonio, Bexar, Texas.[17]

Nellie's body was returned to Grand Rapids, Michigan, for burial following her death in San Antonio, Texas.

Feb 1904 - Obituary

"Mrs. Charles McEvoy

Mrs. Charles P. McEvoy, an old and highly respected resident of this city, died at San Antonio, Texas, Saturday, January 30, 1904. The body will be brought to this city for burial. Besides her husband, who was with her at the time of death, she leaves a daughter, Mrs. Samuel Roach, and a son, Edward of this city, two sisters, Mrs. Hugh Sweeney of Dowagiac, Michigan, and Mrs. John Loughlin of Kalamazoo, and a brother, John Emperor of this city. Funeral notice later."

[17] Death Record

Feb - Burial at St. Andrews Cemetery in Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[18]

[18] Find a Grave

Appendix:

A. Ellen "Nellie" Emperor, daughter of Thomas and Mary (Hogan) Emperor, was born in Jun 1846 in Ireland. She immigrated to the United States as a youth in 1861, probably with other family members who arrived about the same time.

B. Nellie and Charles McEvoy were the parents of six children. Their six known children were Kittie, born about January 1867 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, died 8 Mar 1869 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, of pneumonia at the age of 2 years and 2 months. Cora Irene, born 10 Oct 1869 in Ohio but her birth was registered in Kalamazoo County, Michigan, where her parents were residents; Mary Ellen, born 18 November 1872 in Dowagiac, Cass County, Michigan, Eugene Edmond "Edward," born 11 Jul 1863 in Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan; and a female still born child born 11 Jul 1885 in Grand Rapids. The sixth child of Nellie and Charles McEvoy may have been names either Frederic or Johnnie.

C. Charles and Nellie McEvoy were still living in Ada Township in Kent County, Michigan in 1900. Charles, age 59, was a farmer and owned his farm, but it was mortgaged. Their son Eugene Edmond. age 16, was employed as a farm laborer. Charles McEvoy was a naturalized citizen. Besides working as a farmer, Charles McEvoy also worked as a blacksmith.

D. Nellie (Emperor) McEvoy died on Saturday 30 January 1904 in San Antonia, Bexar County, Texas, of exhaustion, having suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis for 3 years. She was survived by her husband Charles "who was with her at the time of her death," her daughter Mary Ellen (Mrs. Samuel Roach) and son Edward, all of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and sisters, Catherine (Mrs. Hugh Sweeney) of Dowagiac, Michigan, and Mary (Mrs. John Laughlin) of Kalamazoo, Michigan, and a brother John Emperor of Grand Rapids.

E. Our search began by looking for records for Charles and Nellie Emperor. We started by searching for Charles and Nellie in the 1880 and 1870 U.S. Federal Censuses. After searching both censuses using multiple websites, we were unable to find any obvious matches. We also searched the 1860 census for Charles but could not find an obvious match in that census either.